STANDARD FORM NO. 64

Office Memorandum · UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO   : Director of Training   DATE: 25 April 1956

FROM : Chief, Plans & Policy Staff, OTR

SUBJECT: OTR Planning Conference

25X1

    1. Upon my return to duty from my training assignment at _____ gave me _____ paper, dated 30 November 1955, subject, "An Idea Creating Group." A copy of this paper is attached as Tab A.

    2. A Plans and Policy Staff would fail to serve its purpose if it sought or held a monopoly on ideas. On the other hand, it cannot serve its purpose remote from the activities for which it plans. One of the most effective measures it can take, on behalf of the Director it serves, is to create an environment in which the senior members of the Director's staff, i.e. the Staff and School Chiefs develop ideas freely which are aimed toward identifying the planning objectives of OTR and developing practical and effective ways of meeting them. With this objective in mind, I circulated _____ paper to the Staff and School Chiefs and have held four meetings with them, which I have called the OTR Planning Conference. The results of these meetings are summarized in the attachment as Tab B.

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    3. The operating technique of the OTR Planning Conference is to consider OTR problems mutually and to present you with com- pleted staff action for your approval. Thus you will be assured that the recommendations made to you have been considered by all those in OTR who will be responsible for carrying them out.

    4. It is the consensus of your staff and school chiefs that these meetings are profitable and should be continued. It is my view that the results are the only valid criteria from which to judge the worth of this idea. On the basis of the four meetings held thus far, I am confident in recommending that you approve continuation of this activity.

Enclosures:
    Tab A
    Tab B

TAB

30 November 1955

SUBJECT: An Idea Creating Group

Summary

The writer: (a) believes the quality of PP creative thinking
is degenerating; (b) theorizes why; (c) distinguishes between
judicial and imaginative thinking; (d) describes a technique
which has been successfully used in business, industry, and
scientific research to create ideas; (e) discusses the proce-
dure and suggests how we could adapt it to our purposes; (g)
makes a proposal.

In the early days of OPC, I've often heard it said, we were long
on ideas and short on know-how. The general lack of experience with
clandestine operations in psychological and political warfare led to
some prickly, expensive failures and the firm resolve of many CIA
officers to avoid sticking out the Government's and their collective
necks on what came to be vulgarly known as "hairy-fairy" ideas.

I believe that this understandable and necessary caution has now
burgeoned so luxuriantly that defensive, negative, even defeatist
thought has come to characterize too much of PP thinking. The intel-
lectual pendulum has described its familiar arc. This has contributed
to a distinct lowering of morale among many PP officers and their
almost total immersal in lethargy-producing routines. In my opinion,
the current twin shibboleths of skepticism and tradecraft, which God
knows were miserably neglected during the early days, have been deified
until they tend to corrupt imagination. I submit that our past diffi-
culties were not the fault of imagination or ideas; the faults were of
execution or due to insufficient experience by which to judge what was
possible.

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This is not to say that positive thinking has stopped; that would be nonsense. But I think we have to distinguish between two kinds of brain work. One of these is judicial thinking; the other, creative thinking. By judicial thinking I mean the kind of mental work a jury engages in: a dozen minds can jointly judge and judge well. Creative thinking describes itself. It is characterized by the generation of a large number of ideas from which judgment and experience can make their selections. I feel that we have come to emphasize judicial thinking at the expense of creative thinking. Obviously, in public life or in business, both kinds are necessary; in fact, one can't exist without the other. It is the overemphasis on caution at the expense of resourcefulness which I wish to make a point of; and the purpose of this informal paper is to suggest a means of developing imaginative, creative thinking through the use of a group technique without letting slip the reins of judgment and caution.

In discussing this thesis with friends in various divisions of the DD/P, I have almost invariably been asked, "Isn't creative imagination the talent of gifted individuals? And isn't it only individuals of a certain cast of mind who can spark ideas?" It is true that no idea has ever been generated except in a single human mind....no matter how you toss this thought around or how you add to it by consideration of the effect of getting people into a coordinated organization, the fact remains that every idea is the product of a single brain. If this is so, how can we stimulate resourceful, imaginative thinking about the problems of PP operations except by watering individual talents?

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I think that one answer to this is suggested by the results of certain experiments which were conducted by the Carborundum Company and the Stevens Institute, and which have been tested in business and scientific research for at least fifteen years.

A group of engineers from the Carborundum Company took a course in creative imagination* and later put to test the productivity of group versus individual "ideation". The problem selected was what additional use could be made of certain manufacturing equipment which was not being employed to capacity. Twenty engineers were divided into two groups. One section jointly applied creative thinking to the problem, while those in the other section individually thought up suggestions without benefit of group discussion. The group method produced half again as many worth-while ideas as the solo method.

The principle involved was extensively tested by the Human Engineering Laboratory of the Stevens Institute. Under the academicly ponderous name of "social facilitation", elaborate and extensive tests consistently demonstrated that "free associations" (the foundation for creative thinking) are from 65% to 93% more numerous in group activity than when working alone. Man and women show greater creative imagination in groups than individually. A spark from one mind, under proper conditions, will light up a lot of ideas in the others just like a string of firecrackers. There is a kind of chain reaction.

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*To my surprise, such a subject has been taught and it has a small literature. Much of this paper is cribbed from Alex Osborn's "Creative Imagination" (Scribner's, 1953).

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At this point the skeptical ones shake their heads and ask, "How is this any different from the usual kind of conference? We have conferences every morning and they're nothing like that."

I think that this is because the usual kind of conferences are non-creative in intent, nor are the daily conferences run in a manner which stimulates creative thinking. This has always been so, in business or government, and should be so. Such meetings are mainly to sit in judgment; they encourage judicial thinking and do so successfully. But they rarely stimulate new ideas because that isn't their purpose.

Osborn calls a group idea-generating meeting a "brainstorming session". "Brainstorm means using the brain to storm a creative problem--and to do so in commando fashion, with each stormer audaciously attacking the same objective." Hundreds of such sessions have been held from coast to coast by panels of industrialists and businessmen. MIT uses a similar technique on scientific problems under the name of "free-wheeling" sessions. The only time to my knowledge which anything like it has been used in the Government was in the "Advanced Study Group" of the Department of Defense created by General Eisenhower in 1947--and that was different in important respects. It was to be devoted solely to creative thinking, true; but it was idea-thinking by individuals who presented their brainchildren in the form of reasoned papers to a "judicial" board on the JCS. I understand that Rand Corporation uses something very like the "brainstorming" technique on Air Force and AEC problems.

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Nearly all of these sessions have been worthwhile in terms of ideas produced. Fiascoes have usually been due to failure of leadership. For example, if a group-chairman acts omniscient, he makes his more timid members afraid to open their mouths. Then, too, when a leader allows criticism to creep into the proceedings, he likewise has failed to get the best out of his panel. He must always insist that the ideas produced be judged--not during the sessions--but afterward.

Idea-producing meetings, "brainstorming sessions", are relatively fruitless unless certain rules are understood by all present and are faithfully followed. Here are four basic ones:

1. Judicial judgment is ruled out. Criticism of ideas must be withheld until later.

2. "Free-wheeling" is welcomed. The wilder the idea, the better; it is easier to tame down than think up.

3. Quantity is wanted. The greater the number of ideas, the more the likelihood of good ones.

4. Combination and improvement are sought. In addition to contributing ideas of their own, participants should suggest how ideas of others can be turned into better ones; or how two or more ideas can be joined into still another idea.

Those are the guides. The leader should put them into his own words because a "brainstorm session" should always be kept informal. Here's how one business leader interpreted the first rule to one of his groups:

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"If you try to get hot and cold water out of the same faucet at the same time, you will get only tepid water. And if you try to criticize and create at the same time, you can't turn on either cold enough criticism or hot enough ideas. So let's stick solely to ideas-- let's cut out all criticism during this session."

A few incurable critics will still disregard the rule and will belittle what others suggest. Transgressors ought to be gently warned; then firmly stopped; then invited out. It's a matter of think up or shut up.

Surreptitiously breaking up into little groups is another hazard. The leader must make sure that the session is always a single meeting, with all minds working together.

The only strictly formal feature should be a written record of all ideas suggested. This list should be reportorial rather than stenographic. The leader should see to it that all the group-members later receive a copy of that list.

The spirit of a "brainstorm" session is important. Self-encourage- ment is needed almost as much as mutual encouragement. A perfectionism complex will throttle effort and abort ideas. Osborn says that when a team feel they are playing, they begin to produce in earnest. If a leader can make each session into a game with plenty of rivalry, but with complete friendliness all around, he is doing the best that can be done. This requires a relaxed atmosphere, clear understanding of the group rules and a specific target to shoot at. Suggestions then begin to flow and the participants are encouraged to shoot at anything that moves. Every idea, crackpot or crackerjack, is written down.

As to which <u>subjects lend</u> themselves best to joint brainstorming, the first rule is that the problem should be <u>specific</u> rather than general--it should be narrowed down so that the panel-members can shoot their ideas at a single target.

When a problem calls for the use of a pencil and paper, specific <u>wording</u>, a panel session may likewise fail. Experience has shown that a leader can't ignite the necessary cross-fire; the members are usually too anxious to think in silence and to write.

Naturally, the subject should be familiar as well as simple and talkable. "Meetings drift aimlessly when a clear statement of the problem is lacking. By stating the goal in the meeting, a framework is established within which all thought can then be directed." Such initial statements can be much briefer for creative conferences than for judicial conferences. Facts are the brick and mortar out of which judgments are built; but in creative thinking, facts serve mainly as springboards. Too many facts can stifle the spontaneity needed in group brainstorming. Factual justification can come later when the ideas are evaluated.

As to the <u>size</u> of a creative thinking panel, the ideal number has proven to be between five and ten. As to caliber of minds, there is probably no rule--business and scientific panels have done well when made up of neophytes alone, and of neophytes and veterans. Successful panels have been all male, all female and mixed. It has usually proved helpful if a group included a few self-starters; and they should be primed to spark the moment the problem is stated. But they should carefully refrain from dominating the session once it is under way.

In Osborn's experience, the most difficult panel-members were executives who had been over-trained on the usual kind of non-creative conference. Even after ten or more sessions, some of them still could not get themselves to shoot wild. One was a vice-president of a huge corporation. After he finally got into the swing, he told Osborn: "It was hard to get through my head what you were trying to do with us. My 15 years of conference after conference in my company have conditioned me against shooting wild. Almost all of us officers rate each other on the basis of judgment--we are far more apt to look up to the other fellow if he makes no mistakes then if he suggests lots of ideas. So I've always kept myself from spouting any suggestions which could be sneered at. I wish other people would feel free to shoot ideas the way we have been doing in these sessions."

With the right leadership, almost any size of panel or kind of personnel has proven creatively productive. Sessions using as many as 150 persons have been run. In such mass efforts, there is apparently a reassuring anonymity about voicing suggestions, a free and easy formality, a speed and pace that makes ideas fly fast. The ground rules, of course, must be scrupulously observed; the leader must boil down the problem; and the ban on criticism is particularly important. If large numbers of persons are involved, Osborn has found it useful to prime the panel by first suggesting a few ideas in the form of questions.

How about application to PP problems (or for that matter, CIA problems)? There certainly seems to be no reason why group idea-creating should be limited to business, industry and scientific research.

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The possible applications appear to be limitless. For example, the idea for this paper came out of a highly informal luncheon at which three of us began to speculate about the number of recent resignations, the fall-off in zest and interest in PP work, the growth of a defensive mentality, the increasing emphasis upon routine, administration, review, lowered sights, etc. The point is not whether these statements are factually true (though I believe they are to a degree, whether necessarily so or not I can't say). Though it wasn't precisely stated, the problem was, "How do we go about creating a lot of new ideas--good, bad and ridiculous--from which to choose some new directions for work?"

As for what we could expect in applying this idea to our problems... At the very least, joint ventures in thinking-up will do something for those who take part. The participants cannot help but gain in creative power. They will see proof that they can spark if they will. They should become baptized into a habit which can help them in their careers (and in their private lives as well). In other words, better morale could be one result.

Further, I have no doubt but that rafts of ideas would be produced. There are several reasons why group sessions can be highly productive. For one thing, the power of association is a two-way current. When a panel member spouts an idea, he almost automatically stirs his own imagination toward another idea. At the same time, his ideas stimulate the associative power of all the others. Too, there is the stimulative effect of rivalry. Competition ought to increase accomplishment in mental work. The psychologists tell us that the motivation of rivalry

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counts more in "ideation" than almost any other mental function, perhaps because true creativity more largely depends on application of effort.

My modest proposal is that we give an idea-producing group technique a good, hard try. I can see many objections to trying it "officially" under the sponsorship of the PP Staff, not the least of which would be the fear on the part of many members that their first efforts would be sneered at and that they would lose face in the Headquarters hierarchy. I don't consider these objections disqualifying, but I can see some reason for arranging to test the technique through the cooperation of the Office of Training. First, when our people are in training they are somewhat divorced from the day-to-day routines of their desks; and this, I should think, would contribute to a somewhat relaxed attitude. Second, Training instructors as group leaders are better equipped by their day-to-day jobs to verbalize and specify the nature of administrative, support and operational problems so that these can be communicated to their students. Third, Training could sponsor this or a similar scheme as a series of tests which would not so decisively hazard the reputations of participants, in their initial opinion, as would the same procedure under a DD/P Staff or Division sponsorship.

I propose that we give this a try. If your reaction is favorable, I would be happy to attempt to write down some problems which might be "brainstormed."

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TAB
B

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OTR PLANNING CONFERENCE

Summary of Conclusions

After four sessions, the OTR Planning Conference reached the following conclusions and recommendations as indicated below.

1. <u>OTR Planning Objectives</u>: For the foreseeable future, the OTR Planning Conference should limit its attention to three major areas of concern, namely:

    a. Ways and means of improving the quality of OTR Training.

    b. Re-examination of the structure of the Office of Training in light of its mission and functions.

    c. Improvement of the physical facilities of OTR for instructional purposes.

2. <u>Improving the Quality of OTR Instruction</u>:

    a. School chiefs will be responsible for conducting dry-runs on instructors for every new lecture and lecturer. Tape recorders will be used to allow lecturers to critique his own presentation. "Instructor Development Panels" similar to those ▮▮▮▮▮▮ con- 25X sisting of four or five interchangeable members will be used for this purpose. Evaluation sheets will be prepared by the panel to insure uniform standards of criticism.

> <u>Action</u>: School Chiefs have agreed to put this conclusion into effect.

    b. Senior OTR officials, i.e., the D/TR, DD/TR, Staff and School Chiefs should attend lectures given by OTR instructors in their classrooms on a regularly scheduled basis. School Chiefs should attend lectures given in schools other than their own as well.

> <u>Action</u>: Subject to your approval, Thursday afternoon from 1400 to 1600 has been set aside for this purpose beginning with 3 May 1956. PPS will present you with an itinerary now for the months of May and June. Similar schedules will be prepared for the Staff and School Chiefs by PPS.

    c. OTR Instructors and other Staff personnel should be provided the opportunity for psychological assessment by the A&E Staff. The sole purpose of such assessment is to assist OTR personnel to improve his capabilities on a "do-it-yourself" basis. Such assessments would be a "privileged communication" between the A&E Staff psychologist and the individual concerned. The results of such assessments would not be

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given to supervisors or made a matter of record.

> Action: While this conclusion represented a consensus of the group "in principle," there was not unanimity of view on how to carry it out. C/A&E Staff elected to refer the question to his staff and report his findings to the OTR Planning Conference at a subsequent meeting.

d. Course length in terms of course objective and course content should be re-examined and adjusted where necessary. OTR should prescribe the length of time required to meet a given training standard.

> Action: Lack of Agency-wide training standards deters resolution of this problem. First step will be to get DD/I and DD/S to develop standards similar to those of DD/P. PPS will draft Agency Reg. on Training Standards.

e. Lecture method should be re-examined in light of other and better methods of instruction in each course.

> Action: Responsibility of School Chiefs. Attendance by senior OTR officials at lectures in classrooms may result in recommendations for improvement.

f. Basic curricula for JOT's should be established which will qualify him for duty in: Intelligence, Operations, or Support, as a basis for practical career preparation assignments.

> Action: This is part of the over-all JOT problem in which the OTR Planning Conference may be of assistance to C/JOTP.

g. OTR use of JOT's in each School and Staff should be considered in terms of their career preparations for duties such as:

> (1) instructor development candidates
> (2) preparation of training materials in courses they have taken
> (3) staff duties in OTR.

> Action: Staff and School Chiefs will make recommendations to C/JOTP.

h. Measures should be taken to improve OTR Staff meetings and conferences conducted by OTR personnel with representatives of other components of the Agency. Specifically the D/TR Senior Staff meetings should provide for time at each meeting for discussion of proposed new courses of instruction, changes to existing courses of instruction and the effects of such proposals on each component of OTR.

> Action: PPS proposed an outline agenda which was accepted by Staff and School Chiefs who agreed to phone in items for Agenda each Wednesday. A copy is attached marked Enclosure #1 to TAB B.

i. OTR personnel, other than regular instructors, in grades GS-14 through 16 who present or attend lectures in OTR training courses should be identified and recorded on a monthly basis.

> Action: This information will be included in Weekly reports to D/TR. PPS will summarize monthly, if desired.

3. Re-examination of the Structure of OTR

This topic has been accepted as a planning objective but not discussed beyond the point of placing it on the Agenda of the fifth meeting. The first step agreed upon is to establish the criteria by which the organization of OTR should be examined.

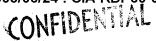4. Improvement of Physical Facilities of OTR

Not yet discussed.

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PROPOSED FORMAT FOR AGENDA

D/TR WEEKLY STAFF MEETINGS

I. Director's Items

II. Training Programs and Curricula

    1. Program Changes and Modifications

    2. New Program Proposals

    3. Course Schedules

III. A&E Factors Affected by Training Programs and Curricula

IV. JOTP "   "   "   "   "   "   "

V. Agency Plans, Programs and Requirements Affecting OTR Activities

VI. OTR Staff Actions

    1. Support Problems and Projects

    2. Plans and Policy Problems and Projects

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> Action: Lack of Agency-wide training standards deters resolution
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